(b) whether new garment exporters are given encouragement by way of allotment of quota; and

(c) the basis of allotment of quota by Apparel Export Promotion Council for manufacturing exports?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) to (c) New entrepreneurs are eligible for allotment of garment quotas under the Frist Come First Served System as per with the existing exporters. Also if an exporter invests a minimum of Rs. 50 lakhs in new machinery from an approved list of machinery) either in an existing unit or in a new unit during a period of 12 consecutive months commencing not earlier than the first of January of the base year, he is entitled to avail himself of garment quotas under the New Investors Entitlement (NIE) System. NIE allotments are made only once for a particular block of investments. NIE allotments are made in the ratio of 1000 pieces of quotas for every one lakh rupees of investment in machinery made during the reference period. The NIE allotments are made by the Apparel Export Promotion Council, in accordance with the provisions of the Garment Exports Entitlement Policy of the Government.

Demand for Price Hike by the Cottion Growers

2790. DR. JAGANNATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the cotton growers in Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan have demanded an immadiate hike in prices to at least Rs. 3000/- per quintal for Narma Variety and Rs. 2500/- for Deshi Cotton; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Minimum Support Prices are fixed after taking into consideration all relavant factors. The market prices of cotton are roling well above the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) announced by the Government. Change in the MSP for Cotton is not being contemplated.

Alternative Highway Between Jammu and Srinagar

2791. SHRI BHARAHAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to construct an alternative highway between Jammu and Srinagar;

(b) if so, the estimated cost of the project;

(c) the expected date of the commencement of the construction of that Highway; and

(d) the steps taken in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) to (d) The construction of an alternative highway named Mughal Road project has been accepted in principle. The proposal is in conceptual stage and therefore it is too early to give any detials.

Delay in Filling of Posts Reserved for OBC in the Ministry of External Affairs

2792. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that candidates sponsored by the Employment Exchange for Group "D" posts (peon) in the reserved category of OBC in the Ministry of External Affairs in its Akabar Bhavan, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi Office have been awaiting their interviews/selections since long;

(b) whether it is also a fact that according to the latest Government policy, all such reserved vacancies must be filled up within the stipulated time; and

(c) if so, by when all selection formalities are likely to be completed?